

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-8, 11, 17-19, 22, 23 and 25-30 are readable on Figure 1, the elected embodiment. These claims were rejected as anticipated by Katsuhiko et al., JP 11-330031.

Claim 1 recites as follows (emphasis added):

A substrate processing apparatus that removes an unwanted material on a surface of a peripheral portion of a substrate through etching by supplying etching liquid to the face of the peripheral portion, the apparatus comprising:

an etching liquid supplying mechanism that supplies the etching liquid to the peripheral portion of the substrate; and

an annular member that has an inner periphery on or inside an outer periphery of the substrate and thereby defines a processing width to be processed by the etching liquid on the surface of the peripheral portion of the substrate.

The applicants submit that Katsuhiko does not have an “annular member” having the features recited in Claim 1.

As explained for example at pages 7-9 and 46-48 of the specification, by providing the annular member it is possible to define a peripheral portion of a semiconductor substrate, and guide an etching liquid to that peripheral portion to carry out an etching process and remove a metal thin film.

Referring to Figs. 1-2, in the elected embodiment the annular member 32 has a guide edge portion 46 which extends toward the wafer W and defines one side of the region on the wafer W that can be reached by the etching liquid film 50.

The Katsuhiko reference, JP 11-330031, fails to disclose an annular member as recited in claim 1 of the present application. The Office Action refers to “the annular member 4, 6” in the Katsuhiko reference. It suggests that the interposed supporting members 4 and 6 of the Katsuhiko reference may correspond to the annular member of claim 1.

As discussed in a telephone interview on March 23, 2006, the members 4 and 6 in Katsuhiko cannot “define a processing width” as claimed because they are not capable of guiding an etching liquid, nor do they suggest the same.

As shown in Fig. 2 of the reference, the supporting members 4 are provided on the peripheral edge part of a base plate 60 with intervals between them. Therefore, the plurality of the supporting members 4 cannot be said to be "an annular member" that "defines a processing width..." as claimed, because they are discrete, not continuous, and are spaced apart from each other on the peripheral edge of the base plate 60 so that they cannot "define a processing width" for the liquid. Further, they are merely supporting members and have no function relative to a processing liquid.

Although it is not considered necessary for the annular member to be continuous to anticipate claim 1, an annular member must at least perform the width-defining function recited in claim 1.

In this case, at least because the plurality of the supporting members 4 are discretely provided on the peripheral edge of the base plate 60, they cannot "define a processing width to be processed by the etching liquid" on the surface of the peripheral portion of a substrate.

The same considerations apply to the supporting members 6.

In view of the foregoing, the supporting members 4, 6 of Katsuhiko reference cannot correspond to the annular member as recited in the current claim 1 of the present application. Allowance of claim 1 and its dependent claims is therefore requested.

There was a brief discussion of the language of claim 1 in the telephone interview on March 23. It is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is adequately supported by the elected Figures 1-2.

The method claims are being canceled without prejudice.

New claims 61-64 recite other aspects of the invention and are supported by Figs. 1-2 and the corresponding text. Allowance is requested.

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as First Class Mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on April 18, 2006:

James A. Finder

Name of applicant, assignee or
Registered Representative

Signature

April 18, 2006

Date of Signature

Respectfully submitted,

James A. Finder

Registration No.: 30,173

OSTROLENK, FABER, GERB & SOFFEN, LLP

1180 Avenue of the Americas

New York, New York 10036-8403

Telephone: (212) 382-0700

JAF:lf